

Upon the arrival of my seventeenth birthday, there were no balloons, no cake, and no celebration. On my seventeenth birthday, I went to my friends' funeral. It was a suicide the police told us, but we refused to believe. The days leading up to it were haze of tears and anger and of my friends looking for support, to keep them from falling apart. A few short years ago, I myself was faced with the prospect of suicide. It didn't seem scary, the many ways I could have taken my life. It wasn't until the voice of my mother and my friends that I realized how utterly pathetic it was. I secretly fought my fears with the support of those around me. I am proud to say that in five months, I will be graduating from high school. In five months, there will be a new sense of freedom and accomplishment, but for me and my friends, another wave of grief for the friend who could not be here. I am now eighteen, and my friend's death was just barely a year ago. However, recently, I have come to realize and understand my friend. I was just like him. I felt the same emotions he had gone through, and even more than that was that we lived behind a façade. We were "happy". At least that was how everyone thought we were. But behind his smile hid a secret that was not exposed until the day of his death. If there had been someone to reach out for him, then there might have been a way to save him before it was too late. Sadly, I had no idea about a suicide hotline. Our school campus does not have posters about it. But by then, it was almost no point. However, right now, there still is hope for others. When I found out about the suicide hotline, I almost immediately donated money. It was my way of hoping for light of hope to continue its work.

The only way the suicide hotline can ever function is through the way it has been running. If the government takes over, I feel that not only will it jeopardize the program, but less teenagers such as me and as my friend could use this hotline. It practices absolute discretion. If the government was to take over and through that action, it would ruin this wonderful organization. From a true human being to another, please, do not let my friend die again. That pit of hopelessness is far too consuming for any one human being. By the taking over of the hotline, it would condemn hundreds and thousands of teenagers to walk the path alone. Don't do this.

Sincerely,

Christina Nguyen